

Athlone Urban Design & Regeneration Framework

Building a Regional Growth Centre

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STRATEGIC PLANNING OVERVIEW

Athlone functions in a similar manner, but at a different scale to the bigger cities.

- **National Planning Framework** - Regional Growth Centre
- **Regional Spatial & Economic Strategy** alignment
- County Development Plan integration
- Local Plan implementation
- Strategic investment coordination



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Promote high quality distinctive Urban Design in Athlone as a driver for positive place based and people focused regeneration as a foundation for future investment decisions

URBAN DESIGN FRAMEWORK

Establishes a **blueprint for town regeneration**, integrating planning, architecture, urban design, placemaking, and tourism.

- Guides the **design and delivery** of regenerative development to enhance overall appeal of the Town
- Promotes high-quality **urban design**
- Opportunity Sites (brownfield)
- 'Pipeline Projects' - **transformative interventions**
- Public spaces and environmental amenities, alongside improved transport, cycling and pedestrian links
- Creating a safe, adaptable, and appealing town environment
- guide decision making and influence investment



COLLABORATIVE APPROACH

Elected Members role crucial to the project's success:

- Early and continuous engagement
- Presenting evidence based proposals
- Alignment with policy objectives
- Building consensus through collaboration
- Present **multiple viable options**
- Comprehensive analysis of each option
- **Respect democratic mandate**
- Enable informed Councillor decision-making
- **Build ownership** through participation



COLLABORATIVE LEARNINGS

Elected Members role crucial to the project's success:

- Start **engagement early** and maintain throughout
- **Visualisations** are powerful communication tools
- Be **transparent** about constraints and trade-offs
- Celebrate quick wins while maintaining long-term vision
- Build **relationships**, not just consensus



BUILDING BLOCKS

Pedestrianisation was simply a building block:

- Natural evolution of regeneration strategy
- Builds on previous public realm investments
- Supports **town centre vitality**
- Enhances **visitor experience**
- Strengthens economic position



INTEGRATED TRANSPORT PLANNING

The project followed a coordinated approach which considered approach based on:

- **Athlone Area Based Transport Assessment**
- Comprehensive circulation review
- Identification of pedestrian priority zones
- Enhanced cycling infrastructure
- Town bus service improvements (with NTA)
- Whole system approach, not just one street



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REGIONAL GROWTH PREPAREDNESS

Realising the potential of Athlone as a Regional Growth Centre evolved over time across many themes:

- **Strategic site assembly** over 15+ years
- Progressive public realm improvements
- Transport infrastructure upgrades
- Tourism & cultural investments
- Education sector expansion (TUS - 7,000 students)
- **Active travel** infrastructure (Greenway/Blueway)



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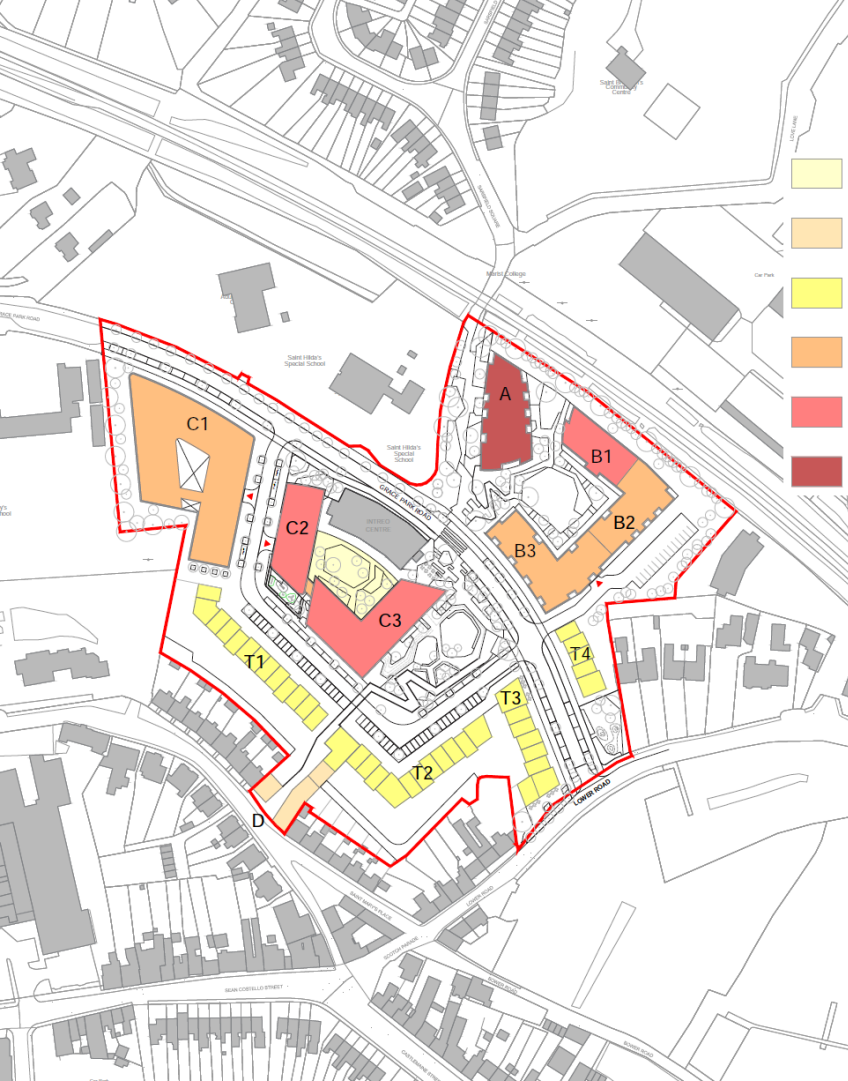


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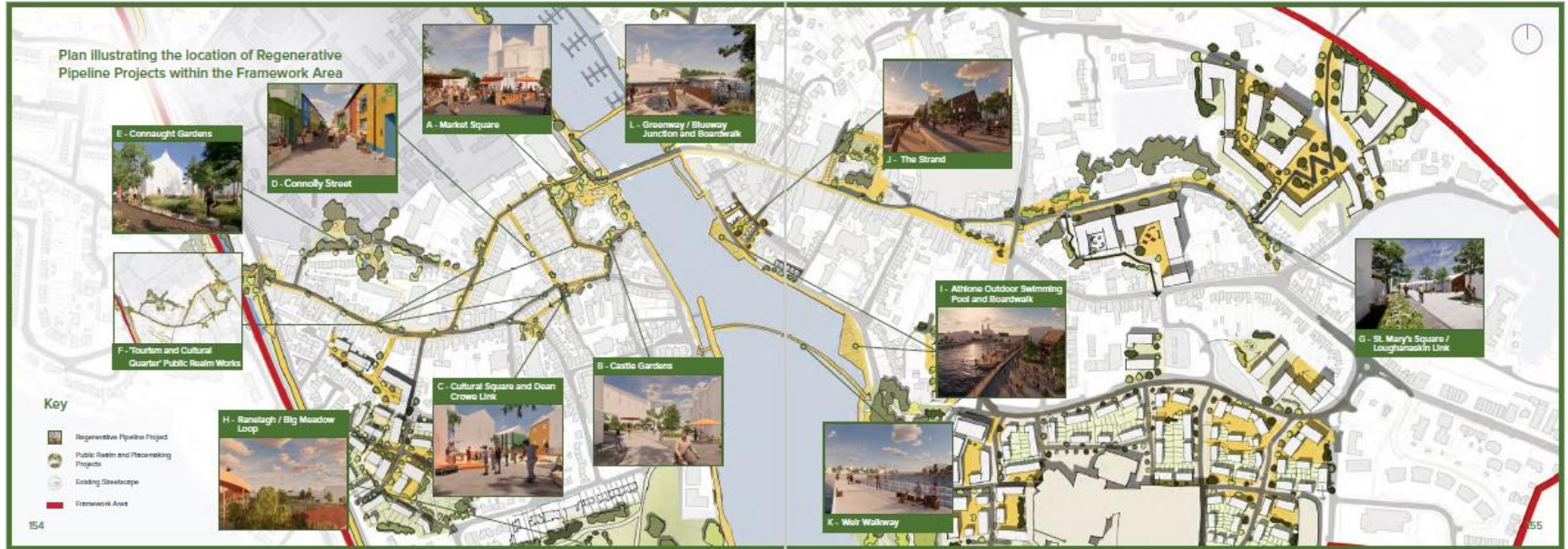
VISION TO PLANNING POLICY

Our planning documents have consistently articulated an ambitious vision for Athlone:

- "Vibrant, inclusive place to live, work, study and visit"
- "Driver of regional growth"
- "Sustainable, compact growth"
- "University town of choice"
- Site assembly began 2000s
- Viable development proposition
- Business case approach essential
- Proved concept for future projects



URBAN DESIGN & REGENERATION FRAMEWORK



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PIPELINE OPPORTUNITIES





SHARED VISION WITH ROSCOMMON

The future success of Athlone will require a collaborative approach to future development in areas such as:

- Cross-boundary collaboration
- **Joint Local Area Strategies** (in preparation)
- **Coordinated investment** strategies
- Unified approach to housing, retail, economic development
- Shared infrastructure planning
- Environment and Climate
- One town, two counties, **single vision**
- <https://athlonejointplan.ie/>



KEY LEARNINGS

Act now and be prepared:

- Vision must predate funding
- Build political support through **partnership**
- **Evidence based** planning builds confidence
- Deliver visible wins while maintaining focus
- Integrate all planning elements
- **Collaborate** across boundaries
- Commercial **viability** ensures sustainability



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